

Published August 4th, 2010

Rack 'em Up!

By Susie Iventosch

You know dinner time is rolling around, when the delicious aroma of backyard barbecues wafts through the neighborhood. Perhaps nothing says "summer" better than baby back ribs. There are so many wonderful ways to cook this messy, but quintessential summer fare, and probably as many recipes as there are patio "daddios." But, this week we are featuring two recipes: one very, very simple method using nothing more than a bottle of hard apple cider and brown sugar, while the other takes on a distinctively Asian flavor with a Hoisin and Sweet Thai chili sauce marinade and basting sauce.

You can find baby back ribs at your local grocers and also at the farmers' market. Holding Ranch is offering its organically-fed baby back ribs at the local farmers' markets in Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga.

"Our pork ribs are produced from purebred Berkshire hogs, which are akin to the prized Japanese Kurobuta pork," said rancher Anne Holding. "These animals are very well-fed, using only certified Modesto Milling feed, in addition to veggies from organic growers and some of our ranch eggs."

According to Holding, Modesto Milling is one of the few mills in California that is 100 percent sourced organic. The feed contains no genetically-modified (GMO) ingredients.

When it comes time to cut those rib racks into individual servings, it really helps to have a sharp knife. Just in the nick of time, Annie and David Latham, of Sharp by Hand, are making reappearance after a two-month, "day-job induced" sabbatical. Be sure to pay them a visit at the Moraga Farmers' Market if your knives need a new edge to prep the meat and veggies from your farmers' market bounty.

Speaking of which, green beans are jumping off the bean stalk and into the market stalls. Though they might not deliver golden eggs, they do make a great accompaniment to your ribs. I really do think green beans are my very favorite green vegetable! The Asian bean recipe is an adaptation of one found online, and after serving it to my family, I can already tell it is a winner!

Holding Ranch

(organically-fed ribs)

<http://www.holdingranch.com>

Diablo Foods

(offers Swift brand premium ribs)

3615 Mt. Diablo Boulevard

Lafayette, CA 94549-3778

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Sharp by Hand

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*Customers can also drop knives off at Across the Way in Moraga.

Modesto Milling Organic Feed

<http://www.modestomilling.com>

Ari's Hoisin-Glazed Ribs



INGREDIENTS

4-5 pounds baby back pork ribs (approximately four six-rack ribs)

1-2 teaspoons Chinese five spice

Marinade-Basting Sauce

1/3 cup Hoisin sauce

1/3 cup dry sherry

1/3 cup honey

1/3 cup Thai sweet chili sauce

1/4 cup soy sauce

1-2 tablespoons sesame oil

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced

DIRECTIONS

Place ribs in a large plastic container with a tight-fitting lid. Rub Chinese five spice on ribs, top and bottom. Mix marinade ingredients and divide in two, reserve one half for basting and spread the other half over ribs, coating on all sides. Leave meat-side down and marinate several hours or overnight.

Ari's Hoisin-Glazed ribs Photo Susie Iventosch

ribs meat side-down in baking dish. Cover tightly with foil and bake for about 30 minutes or just until tender. Remove foil and turn ribs to face meat-side up at this point. Baste with extra marinade. Reduce heat to 350F and continue to bake, uncovered for about 30-35 minutes, or until cooked through. Baste occasionally with juices from the pan and extra sauce, as needed.

Grilling Ribs

If you prefer to grill the ribs on the barbecue, remove them from the marinade and grill them directly over medium heat for 5-10 minutes, until lightly browned. At this point, wrap the ribs in a double layer of foil, adding about 1/4 cup water and 1/3 cup basting sauce before sealing foil. Continue to cook for about 1 to 1 1/2 hours, using the indirect method on the grill, allowing the ribs to steam in their own juices. When finished cooking and tender, remove foil, discard any fat, baste the ribs with reserved marinade and throw the ribs back on the grill for just a few minutes to complete browning. Makes 4 good-sized servings.

Asian Green Beans

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds green beans, ends trimmed and cut in 2-inch lengths
- 2 tablespoon canola oil (divided)
- 4 teaspoons sesame oil (divided)
- 2 cloves fresh garlic, minced
- 3 shallots, chopped
- 1 teaspoon fresh minced ginger
- 1/4 cup prepared teriyaki sauce
- 1/4 cup cooking sake or rice wine
- 1/3 cup toasted, sliced almonds

DIRECTIONS

In a wok or large skillet, add 1 tablespoon olive oil and 2 teaspoons sesame oil. Add beans and saute over medium-high heat until slightly browned, but al dente. Remove from wok.

To the same wok (or pan) add the remaining olive and sesame oils along with the garlic, ginger and shallots. Saute until garlic and shallots are cooked and just beginning to brown. Add the teriyaki sauce and rice wine and cook until slightly reduced, scraping up any bits of garlic or shallot from bottom of pan. Return beans to pan and cook just until heated through, tossing well to coat with sauce. Garnish with a sprinkling of almonds when serving.

Hard Cider-Grilled Ribs



Hard Cider-Grilled Ribs Photo Susie Iventosch

for about 3-4 minutes per side, just until ribs are nicely browned and sugar begins to get crunchy. Serve hot.

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Oven-baking Ribs

When ready to cook, preheat oven to 400F and place

INGREDIENTS

- 4 six-rack baby back pork ribs
- 1 22-oz. hard apple cider (such as Fox Barrel Apple Cider)
- 3/4 to 1 cup brown sugar
- Coarse sea salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Place ribs in a plastic container with a tight-fitting lid. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Pour cider over ribs and marinate in the refrigerator for several hours or overnight.

Spray roasting pan with non-stick spray. Place ribs in pan and pour juices over. Sprinkle evenly with 1/2 cup brown sugar. Seal very tightly with aluminum foil.

Cook ribs at 325FF for 2 1/2 hours or until very tender. Remove from oven and drain off 1/3 of the juices, keeping the ribs in the remaining juices. Cool, cover and chill until ready to grill.

Preheat grill or barbecue to medium heat. Spread gelled juices over ribs and sprinkle an additional 1/4 to 1/2 cup brown sugar evenly over curved sides of rib racks. Grill